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Sentinel Staff Photo

OIL LEAK — Oil is pooled on the ground outside the former Sandoval zinc smelter after a fuel tank valve apparently ruptured, depositing an estimated 200 gallons of what is thought to be diesel oil in an area near a tributary of Crooked Creek. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has been notified of the spill.

Oil Leak At Old Sandoval Zinc Plant Threatens Creek

SANDOVAL — A buildup of oil leaking from a ruptured tank valve at the old zinc smelter plant near Sandoval may soon threaten a Crooked Creek tributary, according to Marion County Emergency Services & Disaster Agency Director John Stover.

Stover said the recent cold weather was probably the reason for the ruptured tank valve, which was noticed by a Sandoval police officer on patrol Saturday evening. Stover was summoned to the scene about 7:30 p.m. and reported a buildup of a heavy oil believed to be No. 5 diesel fuel.

An observer at the scene estimated at least 200 gallons of the oil had spilled.

Stover would not estimate how much oil had gathered, but said it is approaching a small branch of running water that eventually feeds Crooked Creek. The oil is currently "cold and hardened up,"

Stover said.

"It's a heavy oil. ... It's run as far as it's going to run, unless something's added to it," such as rainwater, Stover said. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency was supposed to send an investigator yesterday afternoon, but did not.

Stover said he wasn't sure when an IEPA representative would check the situation, and didn't know what steps could be taken by local authorities to clean up the spilled oil and stop the leak.

"I'm going to let the EPA take care of it," he said. Stover also reported he was trying to find out who owns the property, so they might be made to handle the problem.

The plant is currently sealed off from the public, under orders from the IEPA, because of a buildup in the ground of zinc and lead oxide.